

The South Coast of **Papua**



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THE SOUTH COAST OF PAPUA

The Kamoro

The Kamoro live on a 300-kilometer stretch of the south coast, between the Otakwa River and Etna Bay, at the western geographical limit of what we cover in this volume. Starting at Etna Bay in the west, their territory reaches just beyond Timika in the east. The group holds some 18,000 individuals, scattered among some 40 villages. Most of these villages are located on the coast, with a dozen found inland where the mountains are further from the Arafura Sea. The Kamoro language has six mutually understandable dialects. It is part of the Kamoro-Asmat language family that also includes the Sempan. Sometimes the three eastern Sempan villages are included with the Kamoro.

The Kamoro did not attract much attention until the early 1970s when the giant international mining company, Freeport Indonesia, built its basic infrastructure. Its main port, Amamapare, as well as the landing strip at what is now Timika town, were built on the eastern portion of Kamoro-owned traditional land. This also applies to the lowlands section of the road that the company built from the Arafura Sea to the base of the

high central mountains. The Amungme, who live just to the north of the Kamoro, claim all the land to where the stones stop in the Ajkwa River, with considerable overlap with what the Kamoro consider theirs. In the old days, this overlap area was a no-man's land, with some hunting done by both groups. With the Freeport infrastructure and the towns of Timika and Kuala Kencana, this land has become extremely valuable. Non-Papuans now own a considerable proportion of this land that the central government had claimed as state-owned.

SOURCES FOR KAMORO HISTORY AND ETHNOGRAPHY

Prior to the arrival of Europeans to Papua, there are no reliable records about the Kamoro: only myths and legends. Then we have some frustratingly brief glimpses of the Kamoro from early Dutch sources. These are best summarized in Dr. Jan Pouwer's doctoral dissertation.

Lt. Kolff in a ship called 'Dourga' surveyed some of the Kamoro coast in 1826, with the account of his voyage published in Dutch and English. Dr. Solomon Muller, who traveled to the south Papuan coast in 1828, published a much better account (in Dutch only) of the Kamoro in 1857. His data included the Kamoro material culture, clothing, ornamentation, weapons and trade.

Far more complete information on the Kamoro comes from the 1912/1913 British Ornithological Union's expedition that attempted to climb the highest inland snow-covered peaks. During the 15-month duration of the expedition (that failed to reach anywhere close to the snow peaks), their base camp was located close to the current village of Kokonau. Two



The highest mountain in New Guinea, Nemangkawi Ningkok or Puncak Jaya, can be seen from the coastal Kamoro area on a clear day.

members of the team, Wollaston and Rawlings, wrote separate books about the expedition, with first-hand observations about the Kamoro.

After the opening of a government outpost in Kokonau in 1925, the Catholic Church established a mission at the same location in 1927. Unlike other south coast groups, none of the Roman Catholic priests wrote any early accounts of Kamoro. After World War II, the indefatigable linguist, Father Drabbe, wrote down Kamoro legends, now available in Kamoro, Indonesian and in English. A short while later, Father Zegwaard also gathered Kamoro myths. Many of these myths were published in a book called *Amoko* in 2002, with an excellent introductory overview. Father Coenen gathered myths and wrote about the spiritual culture of the Kamoro, but his texts were not published.

We owe Dr. Jan Pouwer the first thorough account of this group. As a government anthropologist, Dr. Pouwer lived for two years with the Kamoro in the early 1950s and learned to speak their language. His doctoral dissertation was published in Dutch as a book and he also wrote many articles about them. He is the best, the most reliable and the most complete author who had written about the Kamoro. Much of the material below comes from his publications.

The presence of Freeport began to attract a degree of attention to the Kamoro. A young American anthropologist, Todd Harple, worked for Freeport and gathered material on the Kamoro through interviews without leaving Freeport housing to spend time in any of the villages. After the company terminat-

Kamoro villages are always located on or near water. It is only in the area of Timika that road exist in Kamoro-land.



ed his employment, he wrote a dissertation to obtain his PhD in 2000 at the Australian National University: *Controlling the Dragon: An ethno-historical analysis of the Kamoro of Southwest New Guinea*. Then starting in 1998, thanks to Freeport sponsorship, the author of this book organized a series of yearly Kamoro festivals that began a serious revival of Kamoro carvings and some traditional practices. A Belgian anthropologist, Karen Jacobs, attended several of these festivals and wrote her 2003 doctoral dissertation on the history of collecting Kamoro art: *Collecting Kamoro*.

EARLY KAMORO CONTACTS WITH THE OUTSIDE WORLD

The Kamoro probably first arrived in their present homeland from the east. Their language and culture resembles that of the Asmat and there are legends of migration from the east to the west. Some evidence from linguistics and art styles point to a possible migration from the north coast of New Guinea. This could be either the area of Lake Sentani or the Sepik River. But there is no firm evidence for these possible places of origin for the Kamoro.

The Kamoros' first contact with the outside world was with traders from eastern Indonesia, perhaps over 1,000 years ago. There are no reliable written records concerning Papua before the arrival of the first Europeans in the Moluccas, with the possible exception of a document called *Negarakertagama*, dated 1365, from the Majapahit Empire centered in East Java. Before the arrival of Europeans, the western part of the Kamoro area was the south-easternmost extremity of a commercial network that connected the southwest coast of New Guinea

with Eastern Indonesia. The westernmost extension of this trade network stopped at Lakahia Island, at the entrance to Etna Bay.

The main item traded by the (Westernmost) Kamoro was the bark of the massoy tree. The oil from the bark is used in folk medicines and such as various Javanese 'jamu', cosmetics, perfumes, food flavoring and dye fixing as in the batik industry. Perhaps the Kamoro sold slaves as well, or some were simply captured by the traders from the west, based in Seram Island and some small islands to the southeast of it. The traders brought metal items and cloth to the edge of the Kamoro area.

In 1623 the VOC (the Dutch East India Company) government in Ambon sent captain Jan Carstensz to investigate the trade possibilities of the coast of southwest Papua. At the settlement of Mupuruka, the Kamoro, for reasons unknown, killed ten of his men. Perhaps previous visitor or traders had killed some Kamoro? Or the Dutch had cut down trees without permission? Due to this most unfriendly reception, plus other hostile encounters, the Europeans gave up exploration and trading in the area for two centuries. Commerce was left to Muslim merchants from Seram.

EVENTS SINCE THE 1850S

By the middle of the 1800s, with Dutch backing, the trade monopolies of the Seram traders became seriously threatened by the Sultan of Tidore. He sent out 'hongis' expeditions, large canoes filled with armed men to obtain forced tribute. While most of these raids were directed at Papua's north coast, the

Sultan also directed and sent raiding parties as far as Lakahia Island. Letters of appointment were given to the rajas of Namatote and Aiduma, binding them to Tidore, thus in competition with the Seram traders.

When the Russian explorer, Miklouho-Maclay visited Lakahia Island in 1874, he reported on a hong-i-raid that had taken place some 25 years previously. All the huts and coconut trees were destroyed and about one hundred Papuans enslaved. The rest of the terrified inhabitants fled to settle on the mainland. Probably as a result of this raid, the Papuan inhabitants of the coast killed several dozen Muslim merchants and their crews. The Russian was told that traders avoided much of the southwest Papuan coast to the west of Lakahia as they were usually assaulted and their boats plundered. Many of the local Papuans

As there are no in Kamoro-land roads, boys do not play with trucks, but instead with miniature canoes.





Men play their lizard skin drums inside a special house built for an initiation ritual at Iwaka Village.

lived in fear as well, seldom establishing permanent villages. Further to the east of Etna Bay, conditions were more peaceful. Traders from Seram made yearly visits to the Kamoro village of Uta. In 1850, the Raja of Namatote appointed a 'raja' at the village of Kipia to facilitate trade there. He controlled a district called 'Tarja' that included the villages of Porauka in the west to Uta and Mupuruka in the east.

The Roman Catholic Church made an attempt in 1896 to bring Christianity to the Kamoro. Father C. le Coq d'Armandville visited the area, but he either drowned or was killed. Then in 1910, a mission from the Kei Islands visited Kamoro-land but due to the problems presented by nature such as sandbank barriers, currents, difficulty in anchoring and landing, along with none-too-friendly Kamoro, it was decided that this was nei-

ther the time of place to begin missionary effort in this part of Papua.

Around 1900 the fearsome Naowa of Kipia, leader of the west Mimikan federation of the groups of Kipia, Porauka, Akar, Mapar and Wumuka, leading raids to the east, reached the Mimika River. This 'raja' appointed by the Islamic trade-raja of Namatote, also raided westward-going folks from Central and East Mimika who were in search of textiles, iron-ware and ornaments. Many men and women and children were also captured and sold as slaves. Naowa long remained in popular imagination acquiring some mythical features.

About this time that groups from Wania and Kamoro rivers united with groups of the Koperapoka River waged war against the nearby and powerful Tipuka originating from further east. Land rights were perhaps the basic reason for this war, but it was triggered by accusations that the Timika folks had carelessly handled sacred masks so that women could see them. Tipuka lost the war and refugees as well as children of prisoners of war spread out over Central and West Mimika as far as Etna Bay.

Life along the southwest coast of Papua became relatively peaceful after the establishment of a Dutch post at Fakfak in 1898. Muslim traders lost most of their influence. Chinese and Indonesian bird of paradise hunters penetrated into Kamoro lands, bringing metal tools and red cloth as trade items or for payment of services. Chinese traders came for damar, massoy and sago, bringing in exchange axes, parangs, tobacco and betel nuts. They also brought in Chinese dishes and gongs that became important brideswealth items.

KAMORO MYTHS

Sometime after contact began with the outside world, Kamoro myths and legends came to accommodate and incorporate foreigners and their cultural items. We are most fortunate in the fact that two Dutch missionary-linguists, Fathers Drabbe and Zegwaard, recorded many Kamoro myths. We do not have space here to go into depth into these legends, but there are some general comments that will be useful in understanding the Kamoro culture and psychology.

As everywhere in the world, religion gives followers a measure of psychological security, especially useful when facing illness, death and other human or natural disasters. Myths combine cosmological outlook with the fundamentals of religion. Many believe that the supernatural affects human lives, and this can at least be partially controlled through religion, bringing a degree of safety and assurance. Rituals often find their bases in myths, believed to be facts by the followers of any particular religion. This holds true for the great worldwide monotheistic religions as well as the traditional ones.

The Kamoro believe that their cultural heroes, as their adventures are depicted in myths, created everyone on earth and everything on it. This includes items such as motorboats, rifles and cloth, that are to outsiders are very obviously not Kamoro inventions. This also applies to the Dutch administration and the Christian religion.

One widespread Kamoro myth concerns a dragon (or a snake) that today is sometimes called a Komodo dragon. Perhaps it is based on an even larger lizard that died out in Australia perhaps some 20,000 years ago. Be that as it may, one



A traditional ancestral pole carving bounces in the air at Kekwa Village. Called a 'bitoro', this large carving embodies the spirit of recently deceased important men.

particular dragon ate all humans except a pregnant woman. She gave birth to a son, Mbiro-koteyau, who eventually slew the dragon. After this feat, he cut open the dragon and its various parts became all the human races found on earth. Thus all mankind originated thanks to a Kamoro cultural hero, and all races spread from Kamoro lands.

The ancestors of the Europeans, the Chinese and the Indonesians left Kamoro-land to settle in the west. This was also the case for many Kamoro male and female cultural heroes who traveled to the west, never to return. But their descendants eventually did come back to the area of their first ancestors, Kamoro-land.

In another legend, an old man named Mapurupiu died. His soul wanders in search of other souls, the land of the dead. As

he rested on his journey, he found a frog (in some versions also a snake) that made a canoe for him. In later versions of the same myth, the canoe was equipped with an outboard motor. This is an example of how 'modern' inventions are incorporated into old legends. Some authors have equated Mapurupiu with the biblical Adam, apparently the first human. Another interpretation holds Mapurupiu as an all-powerful God who punished mankind for their sins with death. In the original legend, Mapurupiu killed his own brother. This was because his younger brother did not bother to fulfill all his funerary obligations and married Mapurupiu's widow far too soon. Many Kamoro, especially in the eastern and central areas, consider Mapurupiu as the ultimate cultural hero. Due to this, a monument was erected in his honor in 2006, near the present-day village of Mware. Aside from discovering how to make canoes, the hero's death and its aftermath laid down some of the rules of Kamoro life.

THE DUTCH GOVERNMENT AND THE ROMAN CATHOLIC MISSION BRING DRASTIC CHANGES

The greatest changes to the Kamoro life-style were brought about by the government post that opened in Kokonau in 1926, followed by the first Roman Catholic mission in 1927. Father Kowatzki was the first priest there. In 1934 he was joined by Father (later Bishop) Tillemans, a priest who traveled extensively and explored the area. It was during the year of Father Tillemans' arrival that the first baptisms took place.

Prior to the arrival of the mission and the Dutch government, the Kamoro led a semi-nomadic life-style. Their homes were

very simple, a slanted thatch roof coming straight from the ground, with an open front that could be closed off. Families lived together in a long row of these simple structures that could easily be moved. These traditional homes were called 'kapiri kame'. The word kapiri means pandanus leaves and 'kame' means house. Villages were semi-permanent in that the Kamoro frequently moved between the coast where the best fishing was located, to upriver areas inland where the staple sago and other food resources were found. Land rights, owned by different clans, extended along various rivers.

The Kamoro moved periodically to take advantage of their food resources. But they gathered together in large groups for various rituals that took place relatively often. Elaborate structures were built for these festivals and carvings were made by men with hereditary rights to do so.

Nomadic people present an almost impossible task for administrators and missions. So the Kamoro were persuaded or



A man wears a headdress made from the dried skin of a bird of paradise. Formerly, the feathers from these birds adorned ladies' hats in the western world.

forced to settle in permanent villages. There had been earlier a move toward semi-permanent settlement at river mouths in order to trade with Chinese merchants. But these moves were entirely voluntary. In the new government-decreed villages, the Kamoro had to build single-family houses, raised off the ground, with walls of 'gaba-gaba' (the thick central stem of palm fronds) and a thatch roof.

The Kamoro quickly accepted the Roman Catholic faith, superficially at least. Most of the villages were staffed by teachers from the Kei Islands, the base of the Roman Catholic Church in its efforts to proselytize the south coast of Papua. These teachers considered themselves superior to the Kamoro, and often treated them badly. This state of affairs was common with other groups living on the south coast where Kei teachers were also brought in by the church.

Wearing a spirit mask, a man dances on the beach at Paripi Village. The dance forms a part of a renewal ritual.



Initially, the Kamoro were quite keen on having schools. They probably thought that they could enter the world of much-desired material goods through the schools. However, they soon realized that this was not the case, and that schools disrupted family life. Children, who used to travel with their parents when they went to make sago or seek other food resources, were not allowed to leave school. Of course, there was a great deal of absenteeism.

By 1930, there were 24 semi-permanent settlements under some degree of government control. In 1932, the Kamoro area held 21 schools, with some 2,100 students taught by 22 teachers. The instruction focused on religion above all, and the need for order, regular attendance and hygiene. Subjects included the Malay (Indonesian) language, reading, writing and arithmetic. Few children progressed beyond the third grade.

Between 1930 and 1937 a fierce competition took place for Kamoro souls between the Roman Catholic Church and the Protestant Church of the Moluccas. On the ground, this translated into a parallel system of schools and churches in the villages, the Roman Catholic Kei teachers facing Protestant ones from Ambon. It was a wonderful time for the Kamoro who easily became 'rice Christians', following the religion that gave away more food, clothing, tobacco, metal tools or other items. For a while, the civilian administrator and the Indonesian police favored the Protestants, giving them a measure of advantage to make up for their late start. However, the Catholics eventually prevailed and the Protestants withdrew from most of Kamoro-land due to a lack of sufficient finances. They attempted again after World War II, but without success. Today,

all Kamoro follow the Catholic Church. All the Kamoro, that is within the boundaries of the Mimika kabupaten. Three villages to the west, Omba, Lakahia and Warifi, all in the Kaimana kabupaten, are Protestant, too far from the mission center at Kokonau.

While no one actually forbade the Kamoro from practicing their traditional culture, it was certainly not encouraged by either the priests, the administrators and least of all by the Kei teachers. Some priests did show a flexible attitude toward traditional rituals but not the Protestants. In the Etna Bay area, the Protestants even prohibited drumming and singing outside church services. All outsiders, including the government, objected to the nose-piercing part of the initiation ritual, and this practice was largely dropped, although initiations and some other rituals continued.

Aside from discouraging time spent away from villages (even for obtaining food), making carvings and performing rituals were deemed a 'waste of time' by the outsiders. The rich spiritual life of the traditional Kamoro religion was slowly abandoned, in part at least. Today, only the boys' initiation ceremony is still regularly followed in most, but not all the villages, once very five or six years. But to what degree the Kamoro have assimilated Christianity is an open question. In 1961, Dr. Pouwer wrote that 'Until now and after 36 years of acculturation, they have not accepted a modern attitude toward life nor the essence of Christian faith – although nearly everyone was baptized.'

The presence of the government did bring at least one positive change to the Kamoro. Previously, the Kamoro were subject to

frequent Asmat headhunting raids. Three of these were recorded until police with firearms combined with Kamoro warriors from Atuka and the Wania villages defeated and killed a large Asmat war party in May 1931.

WORLD WAR II AND ITS AFTERMATH

The arrival of Japanese troops on the south coast of Papua in 1942 put a stop to any Asmat-related activities. Eventually, some 800 Japanese soldiers occupied parts of the Kamoro lands. A fighter airstrip was built at Kekwa and the Japanese pushed out exploratory patrols as far as the Asmat area. Australia forces at one time reached the Otkwa River before being forced to retreat. Most of the land between Yapero and the south Asmat area became a non-man's land, with neither side willing to commit much effort to control this area.

At first, the Kamoro got along well with the Japanese. However, soon the invaders needed food and the Kamoro were forced to plant large gardens. Reluctance to work was punished by beatings and even death. There are tales of Kam-

A mask, called a 'miikao' is worn by a man during a Kamoro ritual. Only a very few men can still make this traditional spirit mask.



oro men tied on the beach at low tide and drowning slowly as the tide rose. The Kamoro also suffered from Allied bombings and were forced to witness the beheading of captured Allied pilots. The war years also saw a marked increase in drunkenness from the consumption of palm wine. The end of the war was a relief for the Kamoro. They participated in the hunting down and killing of isolated Japanese, under administrative encouragement but also for revenge.

The end of the war saw intra-Kamoro fighting in the western part of Mimika, as well as a resurgence of rituals. Some western Kamoro villages moved to Omba where, with villages from Etna Bay, an important nose-piercing ceremony took place.

As part of the Dutch policy of self-determination, an effective if unofficial council was set up, including government officials and Roman Catholic personnel. This council was responsible for the yearly scheduling of activities. This included the alternation of traditional rituals, work and Christian celebrations. After 1954 this council was expanded to include some Kamoro as well as the Kei teachers. But the council plans for development did not register much success. However, it did expand the vision of some influential Kamoro leaders as well as that of some young men.

Development proceeded slowly after the war years. Most of the Kamoro lived in a subsistence economy, with some possibilities for paid employment with the Dutch oil company in Sorong. At the village level, occasional Chinese traders arrived to exchange goods like tobacco and tools for crocodile skins, ironwood, and massoy. A ship run by the Roman Catholic Church plied the coastal villages on a regular basis, purchasing



Men arrive in canoes while splashing water with their paddles, showing their exuberance. New canoes are built for a ritual of the renewal of life.

copra (dried coconuts) and bringing essential goods at relatively low prices.

The decades between 1960 and 1970 saw the change from Dutch control of Papua to that of Indonesia. The Kamoro accepted this and there were no great upheavals. Small-scale commerce, run by the Chinese, passed into the hands of the Bugis from South Sulawesi. A large-scale migration took place by the mountain Amungme to an area called Agimuga, located east of the edge of Kamoro/Sempan lands.

Dr. Jan Pouwer has traced the Kamoro attitude toward outsiders as an evolving phenomenon. At first, foreigners were often received with hostility, to the point of killing some of them. We do not know the reasons for this, as all of our descriptions of these 'murders' were written by those who suffered but survived

the aggression. There are no Kamoro accounts as to why they killed outsiders. Perhaps it was to revenge a previous kidnapping, or cutting precious coconut trees without permission.

During the next phase of contacts, the Kamoro became far friendlier and more obliging, as they sought very much-desired modern goods such as metal tools, clothing and tobacco. During this time, the western part of the Mimika area became the focus of exchanges, as outside merchants were reluctant to travel further east. Pouwer records the exchange of the skull of a relative for a handkerchief to show the degree of Kamoro desire for material goods from the outside world.

It is likely that this desire for outside goods contributed to the Kamoro acceptance of the Dutch government, the Roman Catholic Church and the schools. However, it soon became evident to the Kamoro that it did not become much easier to acquire modern goods. The acceptance of outsider's control meant that there was drastic disruption of the traditional Kamoro life-style, as we have seen above. And there were taxes to pay, and forced labor for projects such as making gardens, mostly for the benefit of outsiders. These factors led to disenchantment along with passive resistance and a degree of resignation.

This passivity led to outsiders' belief that the Kamoro culture and spirit had vanished. The bleakest assessment of the Kamoro comes from Father Trenkenschuh: 'Mimika strikes a person as a dead area filled with zombies. There is no work and no interest in work. Religion of the past is no longer celebrated and the Christian religion means nothing to the people. The past is gone forever. The present lacks vitality. The future holds

no hope. ... This is a society without any pride in itself, and one which totally lacks any sense of excitement and enjoyment of life. ... Infant mortality is still over 80 per cent and Mimika is filled with underfed and sick people. ... It has been almost 40 years since any local Mimikan feasts have been spontaneously celebrated.... By 1970 almost all local art had disappeared and all artists are old men. ... The three successive governments and the missions have failed in every effort to promote any development in the Mimika area. ... It was difficult for the mission to keep missionaries interested in the people and the area. From 1959 to 1969, East Mimika had 13 different pastors. The people never had a chance to know and trust the missionary...’.

While some elements of this most negative assessment might be true, it presents a very distorted picture of the situation of the Kamoro. The missionary priests, the pioneer proselytizers of the Asmat, saw what Europeans considered a most ‘exotic’ culture practicing headhunting, cannibalism, impressive ceremonies and ritual sex. By contrast, the Kamoro were a boring, tame lot, having passively accepted Christianity and given up some elements of their traditional life-style 30 years previously. And the Roman Catholic Church had evolved considerably in regards to just what was ‘acceptable’ in traditional cultures. Of course, the Kamoro suffered from being contrasted with the Asmat in the eyes of the missionaries and the world, taken with the dynamic, ‘exotic’ Asmat.

FREEPORT AND THE KAMORO

The mining company Freeport Indonesia arrived among the

Kamoro to begin its infrastructure work at the very end of the 1960s. Some Kamoro were hired during this initial phase for various jobs. And the company port of Amamapare attracted many Kamoro who lived (and still live) on the nearby island of Keraka. The port, as well as the road leading to the mountains, (to the mine site in the highlands), were all built on Kamoro-owned traditional lands. There were benefits for the local Kamoro in free health services, providing a market for fish and mangrove crabs, as well in work opportunities. Later, a company-financed long-term multi-million dollar program compensated the local Kamoro, for a part of their territory that had been taken over for the port, the road and the tailings deposition area.

Still-practiced Kamoro rituals required the skills of hereditary carvers for the making of the 'mbitoro', a winged totem-like pole with carvings of decently deceased important men. The carvers also continued to make drums. The arrival of Freeport workers produced a market for Kamoro carvings, unfortunately of the cheapest, low-quality variety. Later however, the company began commissioning large carvings and decorations for its buildings and for public display. Beginning in the late 1990s, Freeport sponsored a series of large-scale Kamoro festivals where carvers had the opportunity to sell their production at excellent prices. These festivals helped the Kamoro to regain a degree of pride in their traditional culture. Unfortunately, these festivals stopped after a few years due to unreasonably increased costs demanded by the Kamoro organizing committees.

After the termination of the large-scale festival, Freeport be-

gan a program of purchasing carvings in the various Kamoro villages and holding a series of expositions in Jakarta and Bali. During these expositions, many carvings were sold, with the sale price going directly to the carvers. Small groups of Kamoro traveled to each of these events, holding carving demonstrations, along with chanting and playing of their drums. The public's appreciation of these manifestations of Kamoro traditions helped to restore a degree of pride in their culture.

Aside from encouraging carving, various Freeport programs have helped the Kamoro in different ways. Most of these programs were specifically directed to the Kamoro whose lands were used by the mining company. They benefited disproportionately from Freeport largess, but some benefits also reached the Kamoro living further away. These benefits include near-free top-notch health care in an excellent hospital, educational and economic development programs.

A company-financed organization (LEMASA, or Lembaga



A large ancestral carving gracing the entrance of the Rimba hotel in Timika was commissioned by Freeport. Company programs encourage the Kamoro culture, especially their carving traditions.

Masyarakat Kamoro), run by Kamoro leaders, disburses funds for various necessities such as returning the bodies of the deceased to their home villages from Timika. But internal corruption has been a brake on its efficiency. Another organization (LPMak, or Lembaga Pembangunan Masyarakat Amungme Kamoro), mostly run by Papuans, disburses a special fund from Freeport that amounts to one per cent of the company's yearly gross revenues. The organization supports religious, educational and economic development activities. Although seven tribal groups now living in the Timika area use the LPMak funds, a disproportionate amount goes to Kamoro (and Amungme) activities, as due to the area's traditional landowners.

KAMORO SOCIAL ORGANIZATION

Traditional Kamoro society was based on residency. Although kinship relations played a part, the most important factor as to one's allegiance was to the settlement where one lived. These named settlements were located on rivers that were controlled by the group. They owned sago fields, along with exclusive fishing, hunting and gathering rights. Once the semi-permanent settlements became fixed by government decree, they became (semi) permanent villages. In the early 1950s, Jan Pouter listed 31 villages. Today there are over 40. A number of villages have combined or split apart, with some of the population moving to other settlements.

The total population in the 1950s was around 8,600, while today it is twice that number or more. This is partially due to natural increase, but more importantly, due to better health facilities. While one source gives child deaths at 80 per cent

and another at 30 per cent, this has definitely decreased at the present. Pre-natal care, especially in the vicinity of Timika and Kokonau, probably play a part as well.

Traditional Kamoro society had many elements of a matriarchy. Marriages required the groom's working at least for a time with the bride's family. Sisters' and daughters' husbands had important functions in economic, social and religious matters. But they were considered inferior to their wives' male relatives.

Related women belonging to one generation were grouped into units called 'paraeko'. They owned land rights as well as control of canoes and other property. But these matrilineal groups did not distinguish themselves by clear ancestor lines, but by living together. Thus the community was centered on a group of 'paraeko' sisters, along with their husbands and male relatives. The 'paraeko' of various generations made up groups called 'taparu'. Most villages were made up of two to five taparu. Pouwer recorded the names of 160 'taparu'. He also found 47 'tribes' in the sense of groups of semi-permanent settlements, having their own name, territory and a feeling of a shared community. Genealogies did not go back far in time, and are vague. New members of a community, once they lived there long enough, were wholly integrated and called by kinship terms.

Under the Dutch and Indonesian governments as well as the Roman Catholic Church, the traditional matriarchy has evolved into patriarchy. Wives today tend to live in their husbands' villages and inheritance tends to follow the male line, although women still have a measure of control over some sago ground.

QUESTIONS

1. Why are the Kamoro quite well known today?
2. Why did trade with the outside world not reach most of the Kamoro?
3. What were the main changes the Kamoro had to make when the Dutch government and the Roman Catholic mission began their administration?
4. Why do you think that Kamoro myths accounted for the origins of mankind and all the material goods?
5. Why did negative opinions exist about the Kamoro during the post-war years?
6. What were the advantages of the Freeport mine to the Kamoro?